

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** - Legislation to aid Valley farmers and workers, H.R. 925 was introduced today in the U.S. House of Representatives by a bipartisan coalition of 26 California House members led by Congressmen Jim Costa, D-Fresno, and Devin Nunes, R-Tulare.

Senator Barbara Boxer introduced a bill in the U.S. Senate today containing the same provisions.

Announcement of the introduction of the bills by Congressmen Costa and Nunes and Senator Boxer was made at a joint news conference held Wednesday in Washington, D.C. Reps. George Radanovich, R-Mariposa, and Kevin McCarthy, R-Bakersfield, also spoke at the news conference in support of the legislation along with California Secretary of Agriculture A.G. Kawamura and California Secretary of Labor Victoria Bradshaw.

“The January freeze has endangered the livelihood of farmers and farm workers in the Valley and throughout the state,” Costa said, adding, “This bipartisan legislation will bring much needed aid to these farmers and farm workers and others who have been impacted by the devastating freeze.”

“Some may say that this bill is costly. My response is simple. The cost to rural communities across our state is far greater, should Congress not act. We have a responsibility to help our constituents suffering from natural disasters and I hope we can move quickly to get assistance to those in need,” said Congressman Nunes.

“Many Central Valley farmers, ranchers and workers have endured great hardships as a result of the January freeze,” said Congressman Dennis Cardoza, D-Merced. “This federal relief package would provide badly needed assistance to those hardest hit by this natural disaster.”

“Today, I join my friends, Jim Costa and Devin Nunes, and my fellow California lawmakers in supporting a bipartisan effort to bring relief to those devastated by the recent freeze,” said Congressman McCarthy. “With California agricultural losses estimated in the billions of dollars, we must do what we can to help our hardworking farmers and farm

workers get back on their feet and continue to feed our nation."

Congressman Radanovich said, "I'm grateful for the work the Governor has done to declare this freeze a disaster and encourage the President to work quickly to do the same. This legislation is going to provide much needed relief to all those who have suffered due to the extreme weather conditions over the past year and a half. I would also like to thank and recognize the local charities that responded quickly to provide immediate assistance to those in need."

The disaster aid legislation will provide as much as \$1.7 billion emergency assistance to agricultural producers, manufacturers and workers in 22 counties in California.

In addition to providing aid to farmers, ranchers and farm workers impacted by the January freeze, the bill also covers losses due to flooding in 2005 and heat or flooding in 2006 and losses as a result of salmon harvesting restrictions on the Klamath River Fall.

Specific provisions of the bill include:

- Assistance to specialty crops, nursery crops and trees, in addition to vines, livestock and dairy production losses.
- Livestock and dairy payments up to a limit of \$125,000.
- Small business loans
- Human assistance including food coupons, grants to assist low-income and seasonal farm workers and temporary mortgage and rental assistance.

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